

Appl. No. : 10/522,002
Filed : October 21, 2005

REMARKS

In response to the Office Action mailed December 31, 2007, the Applicants respectfully request the Examiner to reconsider the above-captioned application in view of the foregoing amendments and the following remarks.

Summary of the Office Action

In the December 31, 2007 Office Action, the Examiner allowed Claims 21-26. Further, the Examiner indicated that Claims 10-13 would be allowable if rewritten to incorporate the features of their base claims and any intervening claims. However, the Examiner rejected Claims 1, 3, 5-7, 14-16, 18, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,547,156 issued to Hader. The Examiner also rejected Claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 14-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,743,018 issued to Morrow. Finally, the Examiner also rejected Claims 8, 9, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0054319 issued to Gervais et al.

Summary of the Amendment

Upon entry of this amendment, Applicants will have amended Claims 1, 11, and 20. Applicants will have canceled Claim 10 without prejudice or disclaimer. Accordingly, Claims 1-3, 5-9, and 11-26 are currently pending. By this amendment, the Applicants respond to the Examiner's comments and rejections made in the December 31, 2007 Office Action. Please note that in the amendments to the claims, deletions are indicated by strikethrough (e.g. ~~deletion~~) or double brackets (e.g. [[word]]) and additions to the claims are underlined (e.g. addition). Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance.

Allowable Subject Matter

Applicants note with appreciation that the Examiner indicated that Claims 21-26 are allowable and that Claims 10-13 are objected to as being dependant upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims.

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Accordingly, Claim 1 has been amended to incorporate the features of original Claim 10. Similarly, Claim 20 has been rewritten to incorporate the features of original Claim 10. Applicants submit that these claims and their dependent claims are therefore in condition for allowance.

In Re Rejections under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a)

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected Claims 1, 3, 5-7, 14-16, 18, and 19 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,547,156 issued to Hader. The Examiner also rejected Claims 1, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 14-20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 6,743,018 issued to Morrow. Finally, the Examiner also rejected Claims 8, 9, and 20 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Publication No. 2003/0054319 issued to Gervais et al.

Applicants respectfully disagree with these rejections. However, in order to expedite the allowance of the present application, Applicants have amended Claim 1 and 20 to incorporate the features recited in objected-to Claim 10. Applicants reserve the right to prosecute the rejected claims in their original or similar form in a continuing application. As such, these rejections are now moot. Therefore, Applicants respectfully submit that Claims 1 and 20, as well as the claims that depend from these independent claims, are allowable over the art of record.

CONCLUSION

The Applicants respectfully submit that the above rejections and objections have been overcome and that the present application is in condition for allowance. Therefore, the Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner indicate that Claims 1-3, 5-9, and 11-26 are acceptable and allowed. Accordingly, early issuance of a Notice of Allowance is most earnestly solicited.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims are in condition for allowance in view of the above remarks. Any remarks in support of patentability of one claim, however, should not be imputed to any other claim, even if similar terminology is used. Additionally, any remarks referring to only a portion of a claim should not be understood to base patentability on that portion; rather, patentability must rest on each claim taken as a whole. Applicants respectfully

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traverse each of the Examiner's rejections and each of the Examiner's assertions regarding what the prior art shows or teaches, even if not expressly discussed herein. Although amendments have been made, no acquiescence or estoppel is or should be implied thereby. Rather, the amendments are made only to expedite prosecution of the present application, and without prejudice to presentation or assertion, in the future, of claims on the subject matter affected thereby. Applicants also have not presented arguments concerning whether the applied references can be properly combined in view of, among other things, the clearly missing elements noted above, and Applicants reserve the right to later contest whether a proper motivation and suggestion exists to combine these references.


The undersigned has made a good faith effort to respond to all of the rejections in the case and to place the claim and drawings in condition for immediate allowance. Nevertheless, if any undeveloped issues remain or if any issues require clarification, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the Applicants' attorney in order to resolve such issue promptly.

Please charge any additional fees, including any fees for additional extension of time, or credit overpayment to Deposit Account No. 11-1410.

Respectfully submitted,

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